of much the most marked and showy variety of the above species which I ever saw, and which, being in cultivation, requires a name. It may as well be named *Var. coronata*, the Crowned Mountain Laurel. The corolla is white, except a broad crown of dark crimson, continuous, but somewhat blotchy, which occupies the whole inside of the cup from the pouches up to near the margin, which again is clear white. A single shrub of this was accidentally discovered two years ago, in bloom in a wood near Framingham, by Mr. James Parker, but was destroyed by fire, the ground having been accidentally burned over. But a branch, given to Mr. Power, was preserved by grafting upon the ordinary form of the species. From this graft, which has now blossomed, it is hoped that this beautiful variety may be abundantly propagated. — A. GRAY.

A WHITE CHOKE-CHERRY. — There is a variety of Choke-cherry (*Prunus Virginiana*) bearing white fruit occasionally found about here. Is it found in other places? — D. W. C. CHALLIS.

ZOÖLOGY.

SHORE-COLLECTING ABOUT NEW YORK. — Thinking that some of your New England readers, who are of course lovers of Natural History, would be likely to pay a visit to New York, and would be glad to know where, and how to pursue their favorite study, I have been induced to send you a few remarks on the subject. It is scarcely necessary to inform them that New York, like nearly all great commercial centres, is a very poor place to collect specimens in their natural situations, especially marine animals and plants, as the shore is so much in demand for wharves, docks, factories, etc.; and this explains why it is so difficult to procure specimens of shells, corals, etc. from sailors, who only visit large cities, and of course who have neither time nor inclination to walk a great distance in search of them, nor much money to purchase them.

Suppose a stranger in New York who would like to collect shells, Algæ, or zoöphytes; there are boats running up the Long Island Sound every day in the summer, and the ferries to Staten Island, but I would advise him to leave the city by the Fulton Ferry to Brooklyn, step into a Greenwood car, and tell the conductor he wishes to go to Fort Hamilton; when he reaches there, walk a short distance to the left past the fort, and his field is before him. One thing he should do before starting is to look in the newspapers and see what hour it is high tide that day, and choose his time as near six hours from that as possible, and so time his visit as to have as much beach as possible, for it would be almost useless to go at high-water. He will immediately notice that the geological formation is somewhat different to what it is on many of the New England shores, being all of the drift formation, — no rocks in place, — all loose boulders, sand, and gravel, so of course there are none of those beautiful natural aquaria full of actinias, algæ, and mollusks in a state of nature; but he may find many shallow pools where many very interesting objects may

be obtained. Of course, the shores have their different seasons, as the land has; for in the month of February the shore is covered with blocks of ice, so that nothing can be obtained; but sometimes in this month and the beginning of March, I have collected some of my handsomest sea-weeds; and we generally find in the coldest months the long fronds of *Laminaria saccharina*, nearly twenty feet long, which are never seen here in the warmer season. It is interesting and worth noticing that the largest marine plants, unlike the terrestrial vegetation, are generally found in the colder parts of the world. We read that our Northwest Territory, Alaska, is famous for producing immense specimens of Algæ, as for instance the *Nereocystis Lutkeana* which forms dense forests about Sitka; its stem is often three hundred feet long, and ends in a large air-vessel six or seven feet long, crowned with a bunch of dichotomous leaves, each thirty or forty feet in length. Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope also produce immense species of submarine vegetation, in comparison with which ours dwarf into insignificance.

But let the naturalist pay a visit to our shores in July or August, and he will find the waters red with beautiful specimens of *Grinnellia*, *Ceramium*, and *Callithamnion*, and a little later in the season the most beautiful plant we have, *Dasya elegans*, in great variety. This plant is also found in the Mediterranean. Many of our plants are found in Great Britain and Ireland, while some are peculiar to this country.

But let us stroll along the beach, leaving the Algæ, and see what shells can be found. *Nassa obsoleta* is the most common; this with *Nassa trivittata*, *Fusus cinerius*, *Natica duplicata*, *Crepidula fornicata*, and two species of *Litorina* comprise nearly all the univalves. We occasionally find dead shells of *Ranella caudata*, *Pyrula canaliculata*, *P. carica*, and a few of the smaller genera, such as *Odostomia* and a small *Cerithium*.

The bivalves mostly consist of *Mytilus edulis*, *Mya arenaria*, *Venus mercenaria*, *Sanguinolaria fusca*, and occasionally, though rarely, *Donax fossor*, *Pandora trilineata*, and *Osteodesma hyalina*. There are a few others found here, but so rarely, that a person might visit the beach a dozen times without seeing them. In the salt meadows, about half a mile from the fort, may be found quantities of *Melampus bidentatus*, and rarely *M. denticula;* here, after crossing a small brook, may be observed at low tide a beautiful proof of the subsidence of the coast of Long Island, for here we find beds of peat, and stumps of trees with their roots spreading in their natural position, showing very plainly, and beyond dispute, that the coast has settled very lately, geologically speaking.

The radiated animals are singularly scarce on this part of the coast. It is very rare indeed that a single specimen can be found of either star-fish, Echinus, or Holothuria; I mean in New-York, that is from Coney Island to the city. When we get into Long Island Sound, to the east of the city, we sometimes find a few, though they are not plentiful for many miles off.

It may not be generally known, but I have been assured by ornithologists, that Long Island has produced more species of birds than any other

place in the United States of its size. Entomologists and botanists make the same statement in regard to their respective specialities. The shores from here to the extreme eastern end of the island are mostly protected from the ocean by sand-bars and islands, leaving large bays and salt-meadows, which are the favorite haunts of thousands of aquatic and rapacious birds. Many birds have been shot here this winter that are generally considered as very rare, such as the Labrador duck, the Harlequin duck, the Goss-hawk, and a few others not often seen. On the shores of Coney Island we sometimes find, about the months of February and March, immense quantities of *Mactra solidissima* and *Natica heros*. Last March the beach was covered for miles with these shells, especially the former, which was heaped up in beds two or three feet thick. — A. R. Y., *Brooklyn*.

The Crow Blackbird a Robber. — Three years ago this spring there came into our village a flock of a dozen or more of the common Crow Blackbird (which are plenty in the country above here) for the purpose of building their nests in the tall Lombardy poplars in our streets, and they have been with us each season since, leaving whenever the young can fly. Until this season they have made their nests only in the poplars, selecting places near the trunk, where the clusters of nearly upright limbs secure them from ordinary observation. This spring they have appeared in greater numbers; two pairs have built their nests inside the spire of a church, passing through the openings of an ornamented window high up above the tops of our tallest trees. A bell is in the tower of the steeple below, and is rung at customary times, and a colony of doves is in the section near the bell. The writer has just discovered that the Blackbirds have taken possession of a martin-house in his garden. They are busily engaged carrying in materials for nests, and the martins are flying helplessly about. Also, in the top of the pyramidal trellis covered with vines forming the lower half of the support of the martin-house, a pair are building. It is a place used some years by robins, but the fact was so novel, that instead of driving them off, a new martin-house is to be put up at once, near by, which the martins, in their necessity, will no doubt occupy. The Blackbirds are tame about our streets and gardens, lighting on the ground at the same time with the robins, with much the same habits in this respect, although evidently going beyond the limits of the village for most of their food.

We have robins in large numbers, — small birds being protected by law, — and on the arrival of the blackbirds the *first* season there was trouble among them, and their note, denoting disturbance, could be heard on every side, and for good reason, for the blackbirds, without so much as saying "by your leave," took the materials from every unfinished or unoccupied robin's nest they could find. But, singularly enough, the blackbirds soon succumbed, and the robins drove them away in all cases of contest; but they seem to live in harmony, and, as I have mentioned, are often in company on the ground seeking for food. — F. W., *Newark, N. Y.*

NOTES ON THE RED AND MOTTLED OWLS.—In a note to the very interesting paper of Mr. C. J. Maynard, on *The Mottled Owl in Confinement*, in the April number of the NATURALIST, Mr. E. A. Samuels alludes to the question as to whether we have two species of *Scops*, or whether the young of *S. asio* are sometimes gray in color and sometimes red, as remaining still undecided. As there is hardly a more interesting or more singular problem in the history of our birds, a brief history of the question, and a short recapitulation of the knowledge we possess on the subject may not be uninteresting.

The Red Owl was described by Linnæus, in the *Systema Naturæ*, vol. 1, p. 132, in 1766, under the name *Strix asio*. Gmelin, twenty-two years later, described (*Systema Naturæ*, vol. 1, p. 289) the Mottled Owl as *Strix nævia*. In 1812, Alexander Wilson, in the fifth volume of his admirable, and in many respects yet unsurpassed *American Ornithology*, redescribes the two, under the same names, also as distinct species; and not till 1828 does it appear to have been publicly hinted that the two were really one, when Prince C. L. Bonaparte united them, he considering the red birds as the young, and the gray the old. Audubon, in 1832, sustains this view; one of the red birds he figures as the young, being one he reared from a fledgling, and adds that long before Bonaparte corrected the mistake he (Audubon) attributes solely to Wilson, he, as well as some of his friends, was well aware of their identity. Nuttall, a few years later, supports the same view. In 1837, Dr. S. Cabot, jr.,* of Boston, while considering the two birds identical in species, reverses the order, making the red plumage the old, and the gray the young; and in confirmation of his views exhibited, as seemingly conclusive evidence, an old red bird he shot while in the act of feeding some gray young ones, which he also exhibited. In July of the same year Dr. Ezra Michiner, in a paper in the Journal of the Philadelphia Academy of Sciences (vol. 7, p. 53), entitled *A few Facts in Relation to the Identity of the Red and Mottled Owls*, states that he had seen young Screech Owls, accompanied by their parents after leaving the nest, of both red and gray colors, the parents being always of the same color as the young. "The conclusion is, therefore," he says, "evident, either that the color of both old and young is variable and uncertain, or that they are specifically distinct." The latter opinion he adopts, ignoring the then sole known case of different colors in the young and parent in Dr. Cabot's birds, very positively concluding there are *two* species, and that Wilson was right.

Dr. P. R. Hoy, in his valuable *Notes of the Birds of Wisconsin*, published in 1853 in the Proceedings (vol. 6) of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science, gives them as two species, remarking he is "not yet satisfied that the Mottled and Red Owls are specifically the same." He says, under *Scops asio*, "In the month of June I caught four young ones just as they were about leaving the nest. They were of a deep reddish-brown, in all respects similar to the female which I shot at the same time, and have

*Journal of the Boston Society of Natural History, Vol. II, p. 126.

preserved." Mr. John Cassin, in his various papers on the owls, adopts the conclusions of Bonaparte, considering them as one species, and the gray as the adult. He adds, however, referring to the fact of the two stages of plumage having been considered as characterizing two species, that "they do present a problem scarcely to be considered as fully solved." But the opinion that the Mottled and Red Owls are really but one species, is the one now generally adopted by ornithologists.

From the information now at our command on this subject, can we not fully solve the problem? The facts recorded teach us that nestlings and young fledglings occur in both red and gray plumage, in some cases birds of one brood presenting both conditions; that old birds are sometimes gray and sometimes red, both colors being common to both sexes, and that occasionally red males pair with gray females, and the reverse; that the young are sometimes like their parents and sometimes unlike them. These facts hence seem to warrant the following conclusions: first, that these different conditions of plumage do *not* characterize *age;* second, that they are not *sexual peculiarities;* third, that they are unusual and irregular variations of plumage of one species. Though such variations are extremely rare, our bird is in this respect not without its parallels in other countries. The best known instance seems to be that of the Brown Owl of Europe (*Syrnium aluco*), which, according to authors, presents similar variations. And they apparently occur in other species of *Scops.*

Considering, then, the Red and Mottled Owls as unquestionably one species, and one diffused widely over the continent, occurring from ocean to ocean, and from Mexico nearly or quite to the arctic regions, have we really a second species of *Scops* in the United States? In 1854, Mr. Cassin, in his *Illustrations of the Birds of California, Texas,* etc., describes a species of *Scops* from California, Texas, and Mexico, "in form and general characters much resembling *Scops asio*, but smaller," but which he considers new, giving it the name of *Scops Maccallii* (Western Mottled Owl). Its validity as a species distinct from *S. asio* has been questioned by very high authorities, and apparently with very good reasons, its chief and almost only distinction from *S. asio* of the north being its somewhat smaller size. Mr. P. L. Sclater, one of the highest authorities on American birds, in remarks (Proceedings of the Zoölogical Society of London, 1857) on a collection of birds from about Oxaca, in Southern Mexico, mentions an owl under this name, which, though he says it, "certainly has the appearance of *Scops asio*, and is smaller," but does not, he thinks, "quite fit" this species (*S. Maccallii*). Dr. J. G. Cooper, who has collected specimens of the bird in question in Southern Arizona, thinks it scarcely distinct from *Scops asio.* The slight differences in color pointed out by Mr. Cassin are of but little account, while the character of smaller size is either of no, or of negative, value. It is well known now to naturalists who have been at all attentive to the subject, that a diminution in size among birds in species resident over a large area is a constant attendant on decrease of latitudes, so that birds residing at points a thousand miles dis-

tant in latitude are likely to differ markedly in size, while presenting no appreciable differences in other characters. The few cases where this does not apparently occur, are only the exceptions to a general law. Hence we should expect to find the specimens of *Scops asio* collected in Florida, Texas, Mexico, and other southern points, smaller than those of the Northern States and Canada. Before this law was fully recognized—and which the immense collections of birds from widely different parts of this continent, recently brought together at the Smithsonian Institute, under the careful scrutiny of Professor Baird and his co-laborators, have aided immensely to demonstrate—many species were indicated whose chief and not unfrequently only distinction from more northern allies was the character of smaller size, and in this category seems to me to be the true place of *Scops Maccallii* Cass.; leaving then but one *Scops*—our well-known Screech Owl—to America north of the tropics.—J. A. ALLEN.

A PERCHING SNIPE.—Mr. W. A. Pope has observed the *Scolopax Wilsonii* in Prince Edwards Island, "setting on the top of a tree at least thirty feet from the ground."—*Land and Water.*

Have our ornithologists observed this peculiarity in the snipe?

THE DISTRIBUTION OF OUR BIRDS IN THE BREEDING SEASON.—Professor Agassiz has issued a circular, in which he asks for the coöperation of ornithologists in securing specimens of birds and complete local lists, with full notes in reference to the times of their migrations, time of nesting, and relative abundance. A series of specimens of birds of any locality in the Southern and Western parts of the continent, with or without their nests and eggs, with the date and place of collecting carefully noted and appended, are much desired. Specimens may be sent to the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, Cambridge, Mass.

SALT-WATER INSECTS.—Dr. J. L. Leconte writes us regarding the supposed Micralymna larva, mentioned in the July number of the NATURALIST: "Your Staphylinide larva is probably that of *Micralymna Stimpsonii* Leconte (New Species of Coleoptera, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, p. 57). It is much larger than the Greenland species, which is also in my collection. It ought to be common where it occurs." We have received from Professor A. E. Verrill specimens of the "puparium," or pupa-case, of the fly so abundant in Mono Lake, Cal., where it was collected by Professor B. Silliman. It is a species of *Ephydra*, closely allied to that figured (Fig. 4*b*) in the July NATURALIST, and is not allied to Eristalis as was supposed. In this connection we would state that Mr. Horace Mann desires us to say that he himself has not been nearer than ten miles to Lake Mono. He only knows that *some* Indians eat these insects.

Dr. Leconte thus writes regarding another salt-water insect: "In your notes on sea-insects, you do not refer to our singular Californian Staphylinide, *Thinopus*, with two species, found below high-water mark

on the wet sand. From the variegation of pale yellow and black they are singularly Crustacean-like, both in the larval form and in the perfect state."

ENEMY OF THE POTATOE-BUG.—I have seen, for the last few days, many of the western potatoe-bugs, with their larvæ, devouring the tops of the potatoes. I have also discovered an enemy in a bug often found on ripe berries, which has a very unpleasant smell, which belongs to the Cimicidæ, and is called Halys, which sucks the blood of the potatoe-bug. —WM. J. MCLAUGHLIN.

GEOLOGY.

GLACIAL MARKS IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS.—Since Mr. Vose's article was in print, he writes us that he has seen on Mount Kearsarge, one-third of the way up in the path, furrows running S. 20° E., and one-half the way up furrows running S. 30° E. Also in Ellis' Valley, about two miles above Jackson, on the east side of the river, close to the road, lines pointing just to the top of Mount Washington. He also found furrows on Mount Chocorua.

CORRESPONDENCE.

W. J. M'L., Centralia, Kansas.—The two plants you send are *Pentstemon Cobœa* Nuttall, the Beard-tongue, and which you say "grows on sandy or gravelly ridges in Nemaha county, Kansas, flowering in May and June;" and *Solanum rostratum* Dunal. Regarding the latter, you write that it "is an emigrant from the west. In the year 1860, I saw the first along the roadside and yards about Fort Riley, Kansas, and a few days ago I found several plants growing on and near the railroad track of the Central Branch of the Union Pacific Road. The leaf is much the shape of the common watermelon; flower yellow; the whole plant covered with spines; an annual; a noxious weed, from one to two feet high; much branched."

[We cannot attempt to name plants unless there is a proper botanical specimen sent; that is, the flowers adhering to a bit of the stem, the leaves adhering to another bit (or still better, when the size of the plant will admit of it, a flowering branch, or, in stemless plants, the scape with the root-leaves adhering to its base), and a statement as to how high it grows; whether woody or herbaceous; and whether wild or cultivated.]

W. C. F., *Eastham, Mass.*—The Turtle which you sent and which you say is the first specimen of the species you have seen on Cape Cod, is the "Musk Turtle," *Aromochelys odoratum* Gray. It is given in Agassiz's work on the Turtles of North America (Contributions to the Natural History of the United States, vol. 1, p. 425; vol. 2, pl. 4, young; pl. 7, eggs), under the name of *Ozotheca odorata* Ag. It has also been placed by the older writers in the genera *Testudo* (when all turtles were placed in that genus), *Cistudo*, *Sternothœrus*, *Cinosternum*, *Staurotypus*, and *Emys*. The